

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

- 5 1. A system for providing a web site, comprising:
 a plurality of business modules from which a company-user selects a set of
 business modules;
 wherein each business module provides a respective function;
 wherein each business module is associated with a respective plurality of
10 templates, wherein a set of templates is selectable by a company-user from each
 respective plurality of templates;
 wherein said templates control the functionality performed by the system and
 the display of information by the system; and
 wherein said templates are customizable to display graphical elements
15 selected by the company-user.
- 20 2. The system of claim 1, wherein each template is a generic web page that is
 associated with at least one command that executes as a result of input received
 from an end-user.
- 25 3. The system of claim 1, wherein said plurality of business modules includes:
 a catalog module designed to display product information;
 a transact module designed to facilitate purchasing transactions; and
 a locate module designed to identify a sales location.
4. The system of claim 3, wherein said plurality of business modules further
includes at least one of:
 an assess module designed to assess a end-user's needs;

- a build module designed to enable the end-user to interactively design products specific to the end-user's needs;
- a compare module designed to allow the end-user to compare a plurality products;
- 5 a promote module designed to allow the end-user to view promotional information;
- a finance module designed to provide financing information to the end-user;
- a lead manager module designed to allow sales leads management;
- 10 a loyalty module designed to provide relationship building activities with the end-user;
- a site builder module designed to allow a partner of the company-user to build a company-user-approved web-site.
5. The system of claim 1, wherein the plurality of business modules includes:
- 15 a loyalty module designed to provide relationship building activities with an end-user.
6. The system of claim 1, wherein the plurality of business modules includes:
- 20 a loyalty module designed to provide relationship building activities with an end-user including one or more of the following services:
- membership services;
- personalized information services;
- personalized buying opportunity services;
- e-mail subscription services;
- 25 on-line access to documentation services;
- chat services.

7. The system of claim 1, wherein the set of business modules selected includes all of the business modules in said plurality of business modules.
- 5 8. The system of claim 1, wherein the set of business modules selected includes less than all of the business modules in said plurality of business modules.
9. The system of claim 1, wherein an additional business module selected from said plurality of business modules can be added to the system.
- 10 10. The system of claim 1, wherein one of the business modules from said selected set of business modules can be subtracted from the system.
- 15 11. The system of claim 1, wherein each business module operates independently of the other business modules, but a particular business module can still receive information that was generated by another business module.
12. A system for providing a web site, comprising:
a set of business modules selected by a company-user;
wherein each business module provides a respective function;
20 wherein each business module is capable of performing a plurality of commands related to its function and is customizable to perform a set of those commands selected by the company-user;
wherein each business module is associated with a plurality of generic web pages that are customizable to have a look and feel selected by the company-user.
- 25 13. The system of claim 12, wherein each generic web page is associated with at least one of said commands, wherein the selected set of commands is selected by selecting a set of generic web pages.

14. The system of claim 12, wherein the generic web pages are customizable to have a look and feel selected by a company-user by changing any of the following: titles, buttons, fonts, and colors.
- 5 15. The system of claim 14, wherein the generic web pages are further customizable to have a look and feel selected by a company-user by adding graphics and media.
- 10 16. The system of claim 12, wherein said set of business modules includes:
 a catalog module designed to display product information;
 a transact module designed to facilitate purchasing transactions; and
 a locate module designed to identify a sales location.
- 15 17. The system of claim 16, wherein said set of business modules further includes at least one of:
 an assess module designed to assess a end-user's needs;
 a build module designed to enable the end-user to interactively design products specific to the end-user's needs;
 a compare module designed to allow the end-user to compare a plurality of products;
 a promote module designed to allow the end-user to view promotional information;
 a finance module designed to provide financing information to the end-user;
 a lead manager module designed to allow sales leads management;
20 25 a loyalty module designed to provide relationship building activities with an end-user; and
 a site builder module designed to allow a partner of the company-user to build a company-user-approved web-site.

18. The system of claim 12, further including a second set of business modules used by a partner of the company-user.
- 5 19. The system of claim 18, wherein the second set of business modules includes a site builder module designed to allow the partner to build a company-user-approved web site.
- 10 20. The system of claim 12, further including a loyalty module designed to provide relationship building activities with an end-user including one or more of the following services:
- 15 membership services;
 personalized information services;
 personalized buying opportunity services;
 e-mail subscription services;
 on-line access to documentation services;
 chat services.
- 20 21. The system of claim 12, wherein the set of business modules is selected from a plurality of available business modules and includes all of the business modules in said plurality of available business modules.
- 25 22. The system of claim 12, wherein the set of business modules is selected from a plurality of available business modules and includes less than all of the business modules in said plurality of available business modules.
23. The system of claim 12, wherein an additional business module can be later selected and added to the system.

24. The system of claim 12, wherein one of the business modules can be subtracted from the system.
- 5 25. The system of claim 12, wherein each business module operates independently of the other business modules, but a particular business module can still receive information that was generated by another business module.
- 10 26. A system for providing a web site, comprising:
 a foundation, wherein:
 the foundation is adapted to interact with a web browser;
 the foundation serves as an interface between each of a plurality of business modules and the web browser;
 the foundation is adapted to interact with any of the business modules such that selected business modules can be added to or subtracted from the system; and
 upon receiving a request from the web browser, the foundation is adapted to invoke the business module appropriate to the request to carry out the request.
- 15 27. The system of claim 26, wherein the foundation is further adapted to interact with a data store and to serve as an interface between each of the plurality of business modules and the data store.
- 20 28. The system of claim 26, wherein the request is generated by a web page associated with a specific business module, and wherein the foundation is adapted to invoke the business module appropriate to the request to carry out the request by:

storing request parameters in a context object, where the parameters include an identification of the specific business module;

consulting the context object for the identification of the specific business module; and

5 invoking the business module that is identified by the identification.

29. The system of claim 26, wherein selected business modules can be added to or subtracted from the system with minimal modification to the foundation.

10 30. The system of claim 26, where the foundation includes resources commonly used by the business modules.

31. A system for providing a web site, comprising:

15 (a) a set of business modules selected by a company-user from a plurality of business modules, wherein:

each business module provides a respective function;

each business module is capable of performing a plurality of commands related to its function and is customizable to perform a set of those commands selected by the company-user;

20 each business module is associated with a plurality of generic web pages that are customizable to have a look and feel selected by the company-user; and

(b) a foundation, wherein:

the foundation is adapted to interact with a web browser;

25 the foundation serves as an interface between each of the business modules and the web browser;

the foundation is adapted to interact with any of the plurality of business modules such that additional selected business modules

can be added to the system and selected business modules can be subtracted from the system; and

upon receiving a request from the web browser, the foundation is adapted to invoke the business module appropriate to
5 the request to carry out the request.

32. The system of claim 31, wherein each generic web page is associated with at least one of said commands, wherein the selected set of commands is selected by selecting a set of generic web pages.

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33. The system of claim 31, wherein the set of business modules includes all of the business modules in said plurality of available business modules.

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34. The system of claim 31, wherein the set of business modules includes less than all of the business modules in said plurality of available business modules.

35. The system of claim 31, wherein the foundation is further adapted to interact with a data store and to serve as an interface between each of the plurality of business modules and the data store.

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36. The system of claim 31, wherein the request is generated by a web page associated with a specific business module, and wherein the foundation is adapted to invoke the business module appropriate to the request to carry out the request by:

25 storing request parameters in a context object, where the parameters include an identification of the specific business module;

consulting the context object for the identification of the specific business module; and

invoking the business module that is identified by the identification.

37. The system of claim 31, wherein the business modules can be added to or subtracted from the system with minimal modification to the foundation.

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38. The system of claim 31, where the foundation includes resources commonly used by the business modules.

10 39. A method for use in a system for providing a web site, comprising:
receiving an end-user request from a web browser by a system that includes a selected set of business modules, where each business module is associated with a respective function and where the functions performed by each business module are selected by a company-user;

15 processing the end-user request by the system, and invoking, by the system, an appropriate business module to implement the end-user request;

receiving resulting data from the appropriate business module; and
generating a web page including graphical elements selected by the company-user and including at least some of the resulting data for display by the web browser as a response to the end-user request.

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40. The method of claim 39, wherein:

processing the end-user request includes:

creating a context object that includes the parameters of the end-user request; and

25 validating the context object; and

selecting an appropriate business module includes consulting the context object to determine the appropriate business module and instantiating a business object correlated to the business module.

41. The method of claim 39, further including:
retrieving by the system, at the request of the appropriate business module,
data from a data store and returning the retrieved data to the business module.
- 5 42. The method of claim 41, wherein retrieving data from a data store includes
instantiating a data access object.
- 10 43. The method of claim 39, wherein receiving resulting data from the
appropriate business module includes receiving such data in XML format.
- 15 44. A method for use with a system for providing a web site, comprising:
selecting and installing a set of business modules selected from a plurality
of business modules, where each business module is associated with a respective
function;
selecting for each business module a set of predefined generic web page
templates, where each template is associated with a respective action; and
customizing each selected template to achieve a selected look and feel.
- 20 45. The method of claim 44, wherein said set of business modules includes less
than all of the business modules in said plurality of business modules.
- 25 46. The method of claim 45, further comprising:
later selecting and installing another business module.
47. A system for providing an internet sales environment, comprising:
a web site to interface with an end-user, the web site guiding the end-user
through a sales process by utilizing a selected set of one or more modules

previously selected from a plurality of modules, where the plurality of modules includes:

- an assess module designed to determine the end-user's needs and provide a personalized product recommendation;
 - 5 a catalog module designed to display and maintain product information;
 - a build module designed to enable the end-user to interactively assemble products and services specific to the end-user's needs;
 - 10 a compare module designed to allow the end-user to compare multiple products;
 - a promote module designed to allow the end-user to view promotional information;
 - a finance module designed to give a end-user the ability to examine financing scenarios;
 - 15 a transact module designed to facilitate a sales transaction.
48. The system of claim 47, wherein the plurality of modules further includes:
- a locate module designed to identify a sales location;
 - a lead manager module designed to allow sales leads management;
 - 20 a loyalty module designed to provide relationship building activities with the end-user; and
 - a site builder module designed to allow the partner of the company-user to build a company-user-approved web-site.
- 25 49. A system for providing an internet sales environment, comprising:
a web site to interface with an end-user, the web site guiding the end-user through a sales process by utilizing a selected set of modules that includes:
a catalog module;

- a transact module; and
a locate module.
50. The system of claim 49, further including:
5 a finance module.
51. The system of claim 49, further including:
a compare module.
- 10 52. The system of claim 49, further including:
a loyalty module.
53. The system of claim 49, further including:
an assess module;
- 15 a build module; and
a promote module.
54. A system for providing an internet sales environment, comprising:
a web site to interface with an end-user, the web site guiding the end-user
20 through a sales process by utilizing a selected set of modules that includes:
a catalog module;
a transact module; and
a loyalty module.
- 25 55. A system for providing an internet sales environment, comprising:
a web site to interface with an end-user, the web site guiding the end-user
through a sales process by utilizing a selected set of modules that includes:
a build module;

- a catalog module;
a transact module; and
a locate module.
- 5 56. The system of claim 55, further including:
a finance module.
- 10 57. The system of claim 55, further including:
a compare module.
- 15 58. The system of claim 55, further including:
a loyalty module.
- 20 59. A system for providing an internet sales environment, comprising:
a web site to interface with an end-user, the web site guiding the end-user
through a sales process by utilizing a selected set of modules that includes:
a assess module;
a catalog module;
a transact module; and
a locate module.
- 25 60. The system of claim 59, further including:
a finance module.
- 25 61. The system of claim 59, further including:
a compare module.
62. A system for providing an internet sales environment, comprising:

a web site to interface with an end-user, the web site guiding the end-user through a sales process by utilizing a selected set of modules that includes:

- 5 an assess module;
- a build module;
- a catalog module;
- a transact module; and
- a locate module.

63. A method for conducting e-commerce, comprising:
10 assessing an end-user's needs;
 displaying to the end-user product information;
 allowing the end-user to assemble customized products;
 allowing the end-user to compare a plurality of products;
 displaying to the end-user promotion information;
15 displaying to the end-user financing information;
 locating a sales location based on information provided by the end-user; and
 forwarding information to the sales location identifying the end-user and any
products selected by the end-user in order to complete a sales transaction.
- 20 64. The method of claim 63, further comprising:
 providing loyalty building services.
- 25 65. The method of claim 63, further comprising:
 managing sales leads.
66. A computer readable medium have a set of instructions stored therein which
when executed by a computer causes the computer to provide an on-line sales

environment by performing the following steps in response to respective on-line end-user requests:

- assessing an end-user's needs;
- displaying to the end-user product and service information;
- 5 allowing the end-user to assemble customized products;
- allowing the end-user to compare a plurality of products;
- displaying to the end-user promotion information;
- displaying to the end-user financing information;
- locating a sales location based on information provided by the end-user; and
- 10 forwarding information to the sales location identifying the end-user and any products selected by the end-user in order to complete a sales transaction.

67. The computer readable medium of claim 66, further including instructions to perform the following step:

- 15 providing loyalty building services.

68. The computer readable medium of claim 66, further including instructions to perform the following step:

- managing sales leads.

20 69. A set of signals sent by a company-user computer, which when received by an end-user computer causes the end-user computer to display pages that represent an on-line sales environment, the pages including:

- pages for assessing an end-user's needs;
- 25 pages for displaying to the end-user product and service information;
- pages for allowing the end-user to assemble customized products;
- pages for allowing the end-user to compare a plurality of products;
- pages for displaying to the end-user promotion information;

pages for displaying to the end-user financing information;
pages for displaying a sales location based on information provided by the
end-user; and
pages used for completing a sales transaction.

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70. A method for use by a system that includes a display, comprising:
displaying a page for use in assessing an end-user's needs;
displaying a page with product and service information;
displaying a page for use in assembling customized products;
10 displaying a page for use in comparing a plurality of products;
displaying a page with promotion information;
displaying a page with financing information;
displaying a page with a sales location based on information provided by the
end-user; and
15 displaying a page for use in completing a sales transaction.

71. A system for providing an online sales environment, comprising:
a company user web site that interfaces with an end-user, the web site
guiding the end-user through a sales process;
20 a partner web site that interfaces with the end-user;
wherein the partner web site is constructed utilizing a site builder module
adapted to allow the partner to build a company-user-approved web site;
wherein the company-user web site gathers sales lead information from an
end-user and passes said sales lead information to the partner to complete a sales
25 transaction with the end-user.

72. A method, comprising:
storing a session ID on a client computer;

storing a session state corresponding to the session ID on a session state server, wherein the session state can be accessed by more than one application server.

- 5 73. The method of claim 72, wherein storing a session state is performed by an NT service.